

ADVICE AND TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS AS THE WINTER SEASON APPROACHES



Below are simple steps YOU can take to make a big impact on preventing falls for older adults and adults with disabilities in your home and your community.

TIPS FOR WALKING

- Check shoes, boots and assistive devices and ensure they are “winterized.”
- Have good traction on your shoes or invest in snow and ice walkers (such as ice cleats or Yaktrax) that stretch to fit over your shoes to provide increased traction for walking. Please remove inside home.
- Consider an ice gripper for your cane or use hiking poles with rubber tips that can be removed to leave an ice tip on the bottom for use in icy conditions.
- Keep walking paths clear of snow and ice. Be aware and be cautious. Walk as though snow and ice are present.
- Wear gloves to keep hands free (not in your pockets) to help balance yourself.
- Consider a backpack or an over the shoulder strapped bag to carry items, to have your hands free.
- Travel on pathways that are directly in the sun since they are often less icy. If snow and ice cannot be removed from a particular area, spread salt, sand or ice melt to improve traction. Carry a zip plastic bag in your pocket filled with kitty litter to spread out ahead of your path if there is an unavoidable icy area.
- Take slower smaller steps and understand that activities such as crossing streets will take longer.
- Wear bright colored clothing so that you can be seen easier. Consider purchasing reflective tape for your outdoor clothing and cane or walker. Shorter days mean more time in the dark.

TIPS FOR CAR TRAVEL

- Take great care getting in and out of a vehicle. Try to keep three points of contact when getting in and out of a vehicle: both legs and an arm or two arms and a leg.
- When getting out of the vehicle, remember your foot may slide sideways.

HEALTH TIPS

- Get your vitamin D. Vitamin D is linked to muscle strength, improves balance, and is a supplement known to reduce falls. Many physicians recommend taking vitamin D supplements year round to make sure they get the proper amount of the daily suggested adult requirement. (800-1000 IU)
- Sunlight provides vitamin D, however if you live in the northern two thirds of the United States, the sun is too far away during the cold season to trigger your skin to make vitamin D.
- Have your vision checked. Prescriptions may need adjustments and eye problems can be detected.
- Have your medications reviewed by your pharmacist and get a good night sleep.
- Find a good balance and exercise program. Classes and instructors can be found at www.iowaaging.gov/falls-prevention.
- Geriatricians do not recommend use of Tylenol PM, Benadryl or other PM-type pain reliever at night. The evidence has shown to increase the risk of confusion and drowsiness related to falls.

HOME SAFETY

- Install grab bars in bathroom and handrails next to indoor steps and thresholds.
- Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting and make stairs safe.
- Install stair railings on both sides and set automatic lights over stairways and by outside entrances.
- Cover the entryways to the home and provide a table to set down bags while finding keys.

Talk with your family members in taking simple steps to stay safe. We encourage adult children to give useful and lifesaving fall-proofing holiday gifts to parents. Falls are not just a “seniors” issue.

Please visit www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/ to watch the video clip “6 steps to reduce falls”, as well as, additional tips to help keep your family and community safe this holiday season.